

**Senator Max Cleland**  
**Commerce Committee Hearing on Election Reform**  
**Secretary of State Cathy Cox introduction**  
**3/7/01**

I want to thank Chairman McCain and Senator Hollings for holding this hearing today on election reform. I appreciate their leadership on this important issue. Mr. Chairman, we can all agree that last year's election was one of the most unusual political events this country has ever seen. As a former Secretary of State and chief elections official in Georgia, I believe it was also a wake up call for reforming our electoral process. I have reviewed the McCain-Hollings' *American Voting Standards Technology Act*, which directs the National Institute on Standards and Technology to develop voluntary standards for the voting process, and provides grants to the States to rehabilitate voting equipment and strengthen voter education. The McCain-Hollings bill targets reform where help is needed and I am pleased to support it.

Today, I will introduce my own bill, the **Make Every Vote Count Act**, to help States and Localities modernize voting systems, promote uniformity in voting equipment *within states* and require greater standardization in assuring the voting rights of our military personnel. My legislation creates a one-time, \$1 billion federal block grant for replacement of punchcard voting systems (which are used by 34% of the Nation's voters), lever machines (19% of voters), and paper ballots (2% of voters) with a more advanced voting system, such as optical scan or electronic systems. Because many errors are caused by inadequate training of election workers or education of voters in how to properly cast valid votes, and such errors are especially likely when converting to a new system, the bill would allow up to one-third of the grant funds to be used for those purposes. Finally, the bill will assure the voting rights of out of state military personnel by protecting their absentee ballots.

Today I have the pleasure of introducing Georgia's Secretary of State, Cathy Cox, to the Committee. Secretary Cox has truly been one of the national leaders who have risen to the challenge during the debate on election reform. Her study of the Georgia elections, *A Wake Up Call for Reform and Change*, highlights one of the most serious problems experienced last November: the failure of outdated systems on which too many of our citizens are forced to use in casting their ballots. The error rates from November showed considerable variation *between States*, depending on the type or types of voting system used in each state, and *within States*, with voters residing in counties using 1960's "punch card ballot" technology experiencing the highest errors. Cathy Cox has come up with what I believe is an excellent solution for our state's problems and I am very pleased that the committee has called on her expertise today.